

LIEBERMANN-MEFFERT, WHITE



A CENTURY OF INTERNATIONAL PROGRESS AND TRADITION IN SURGERY

A Century
of
International Progress
and
Tradition in Surgery



*An Illustrated History of the
International Society of Surgery*

D. Liebermann-Meffert, H. White

In collaboration with H.J. Stein, M. Feith and V. Bertschi



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Foreword

As the International Surgical Society (ISS)/Société Internationale de Chirurgie (SIC) celebrates its centenary at this 39th Congress in Brussels, the city where the Society was founded and where its Secretariat was located for many years, it is an opportune time for a history of the Society to be published. The ISS is the first and oldest International Surgical Society in the world and Drs. Liebermann-Meffert and White have painstakingly worked through the archives, such as they were, and other sources of information to put together a comprehensive review of the ISS during the past century. This has not been easy, as you might imagine, but nevertheless they are to be congratulated on producing such a fascinating account of the Society over its first 100 years. One cannot help but be impressed with the names of the surgeons who were prominent members of the ISS over the years, and certainly in the earlier part of the last century there cannot have been any surgeon of note internationally who was not a member of the ISS. As Drs. Liebermann-Meffert and White point out, the drive to establish the Society at the end of the 19th century was the difficulty of international communication, in contrast to today where communication exists at the push of a button. One then has to ask whether there is still a role for an international society such as the ISS. I firmly believe that there is, but perhaps for different reasons to those which led to the foundation of the Society. Today the increased specialization in surgery means that there are few Societies in which the generality of surgery with its different specialist interests comes together every two years and provides an opportunity for its participants to learn about areas outside their own special interest. This is also reflected in our very successful journal, the *World Journal of Surgery*. Thus, I feel that this is the modern rationale for the ISS, which will ensure that it continues to flourish in the 21st century. We are all indebted to the authors for providing us with such a fascinating record of our origins.

Peter J. Morris, FRS, PRCS

President International Surgical Society

President Royal College of Surgeons of England

Preface

The approaching centenary of the Society was the catalyst for this record being made available to members in book form. It was also one way of imposing order on and analysing the vast amount of disorganised material lodged in 1980 in the new offices of the Society developed by Martin Allgöwer in Basle/Pratteln. He enlisted the help and enthusiasm of one of us in beginning this task which necessitated reading through 442 files – including many hand-written letters in French, German, English, Italian and Spanish. Some were undated and had to be identified and arranged in chronological order. Worthless material (including reprints, bills and details of hotels) was removed. Funding such a task was initially a problem but this was gradually overcome with personal and outside help. After this, work on the book could be started and brings to members of the Society the history from the foundation to the present day.

The elitist nature of the Society is apparent from the very beginning and the difficulties of fusing individuals with powerful personalities – separated by vast distances before the ease of communication which we enjoy today – should not be underestimated. Imposed on this was the turmoil of two World Wars. Ultimately we have tried to document a century of international progress and tradition in surgery which serves as the title of this book. There have inevitably been some difficulties and there are regrettable omissions. A few apparently well organised institutions were either reluctant, too busy or too disorganised to answer some of our queries. For these deficiencies and those of our own making we must apologise.

However, we believe that although incomplete and imperfect, the selection made from the material available has enabled us to bring to the Society a useful historical overview. We have tried to keep alive by photographs and short biographies some of the personalities who have individually and collectively been so important to the Society. The task has been greatly helped by Norbert Krämer of Kaden Verlag, Heidelberg, Germany.

Dorothea Liebermann-Meffert

Harvey White

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1 The First International Surgical Society

Historical Review

The introduction of controllable pain relief using sulfuric ether by Morton in the year 1864 and of the antiseptic methods, which effectively combatted wound infection by Lister one year later, opened a new, wide and fascinating approach to surgical techniques. Surgeons became rapidly aware of the changing face of surgery by great innovations. They recognized the necessity to communicate with each other, to exchange experience and to improve the art and science of surgery. As a result, surgical societies were established in most European countries in the course of the second half of the 19th Century. Similar plans were made in the USA, Germany and France for the founding of societies on an international basis because it appeared necessary to establish contacts by gathering experienced surgeons from all over the world who could discuss worldwide surgical progress¹.

On September 9, 1902 the first International Society of Surgery was established in Brussels through the initiative of the surgeons of the Belgian Society under the leadership of its President Professor Charles Willems of Gent. A delegation of distinguished surgeons from 17 European countries and one from the USA was assembled during the founding session of the society, which was named “Société Internationale de Chirurgie (SIC)” or “International Society of Surgery (ISS)”, respectively. The principle goal of the Society was to contribute to the progress of surgery.

When in 1905 the Society held the first congress under the presidency of the Nobel laureate Professor Theodor Kocher from Switzerland, it had already 638 members from 23 countries, 195 of whom attended the meeting². The initial tradition of triennial meetings changed to biennial after World War II. The congresses were held in cities in different countries in Europe and overseas and were devoted “to controversial surgical questions of immediate importance”. All the speakers of the first decades were invited and recruited from the surgical elite of their time from all over the world.

The transactions of each congress, all addresses, articles and discussions were translated in the officially recognized languages of the congress – 6 in number ! – and appeared in full text and later in abstract form in octavo volumes, averaging from 800 to 900 pages each.

The fellowship was obtained solely by recognized professional merit. A mere glance at the list of fellows of the early times as published in the Congress Reports of 1905 shows that none of those who was elected required scrutiny to prove their professional worth and distinction.

In spite of political disharmonies and “tragic wars” ending up with millions of humans killed, international surgical loyalty lasted through the decades³. There was, however, the temporary exclusion of the German, Austrian and Japanese members after the two wars. According to the original constitution, the presidents of the ISS/SIC had to be of Belgian nationality, but when the first non Belgian was elected as President of the Society, this was the German Professor Fritz Linder from Heidelberg in 1973.

New competitive surgical societies, insolvency of members through economic depression, inflationary periods and foreign exchange regulations, an extreme cost explosion for congresses, publications and secretarial expenses advancingly brought the ISS/SIC into an economic crisis.

In 1980, the General Secretariat of the ISS/SIC was moved from Brussels to Basle and Pratteln, Switzerland under Professor Martin Allgöwer as Secretary General. The number of members had exceeded 3,000 by then. Today the ISS/SIC is nearly 4,000 members strong.

References and Annotations

- 1 James WW Keen (ed) The memoirs of William Williams Keen, M.D.: A Keen Book. Library of Congress Catalog, Doylestown, Pennsylvania, 1990 pp 61–62

The prominent American surgeon William Williams Keen (see Chapter 11) reports in his memories that in the late eightennineties he made a serious effort to initiate a movement for an international surgical congress. He negotiated with John S. Billings, who in 1888 was the first president of the triennial Congress of American Physicians and Surgeons, and other leading surgeons in the U.S. as well as with the European surgical authorities Czerny, Kocher, Gussenbauer, von Bergmann, Durante in Germany, Switzerland, Austria, France, Italy and Great Britain. Following Keen they all approved the idea, and would have materialized, but for the attitude of the British surgeons. The system of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, however, did not match his concept of an international society of surgery. Keen noted that finally he had to „abandon the scheme“.

- 2 Willems Ch: Liste des membres. 1^{er} Congr Soc Int Chir 1, 17–44, 1906
- 3 Linder F: Letter to Dr. Liebermann-Meffert, 1987

2 Origins

State of Surgery up-to the 19th century

The Middle Ages

The founding of associations of surgeons dates back to the Middle-Ages as a mean to improving and maintaining the position and prestige when religious fanaticism rose and medicine declined^{1,2}. The fundamental knowledge of anatomy and surgical procedures of the ancient medical schools was kept alive in Arabia and in the European monasteries³⁻⁹ during the migration of the Teutonic nations in Europe. Rise of the clerical predominance and the scholastic philosophy (Ecclesia abhorred a sanguine) prohibited practical surgery by any members of convents and universities^{6,7} from the years 1163 to 1215 by Ecclesiastic Councils. In that period, the philosophical-medical teaching of the Greek physician Claudius Galen (130–201 A.D.) still persisted as a dogma: disease is God's "business", His Will and his punishment. Operative intervention was solely in hand of laymen, i.e. the barbers and to some extent their untrained assistants^{6,8}. Bad medical education, quackery, vagabond life, and crude surgery led to disrepute and a drop on the status of the non-academic barbers⁵.

Emancipation of Surgery

In order to overcome the unsatisfactory situation of the Middle Ages, the better trained surgeons gathered together to found a company, the guild of barber-surgeons. A policy of rigid selection determined the membership. Prestigious guilds for example were Saint Côme founded 1311 at Paris and the Barber-Surgeons Company of England 1540–1740^{3,7,8}.

The attempt of the few scientifically skilled surgical university teachers at Paris, Bologna, London and Edinburgh led to the foundation of the Collège de Chirurgie, Académie Royale de Chirurgie 1731–1793 in France and the Company of Surgeons in England 1745.

Following the example of France (1731) and of England (1800) – where the surgeons managed to separate from the corporation of the barber-surgeons in the year 1845 – the corporate-feeling and the necessity to exchange ideas of technical progress, leading surgeons were establishing local associations in different European countries^{4,6,8-10}.

National Surgical Societies

In the modern age with all the technological improvements, the care of communication by the internet and the benefit of telecommunication, it might be difficult to appreciate all the reasons which led to the founding of surgical organizations, especially as it appears that we are now becoming tired of joining professional bodies. However, at the commencement of the twentieth century one serious handicap was communication. This was extremely poor, slow and antiquated. No radio, no telephone, no fax, no computers, no television nor videos were available. In recognition of the uncertainty and the deluge of new information, critical surgeons and physicians decided to found societies on a national basis (Table 3.1) for an exchange of opinions and experiences.

International Exchange

Communication initially was too slow for the rapid evolution in the progress of surgery. Language problems were another impediment after the progressive loss of colloquial Latin, which was the traditional common academic language in Europe for centuries. Travelling was tiresome, complicated and time consuming in the era before airplanes and rapid road and rail transport existed. However, a small number of young privileged surgeons maintained the ancient tradition of visiting foreign universities. They took time off and traveled to surgical centers such as Paris, Glasgow, Vienna and Berlin, anxious to learn the new surgical achievements, skills and techniques from Louis Pasteur, Joseph Lord Lister, Theodor Billroth, and Bernhard von Langenbeck. But this opportunity was available only to a minority of surgeons.

An International Society – would founding bring benefits?

The second half of the 19th century was a period of growing self-confidence and nationalism. However, a number of surgeons believed that the development of surgery throughout the world should be independent of politics. They strongly believed in the French saying *la science n'a pas de patrie!* (Science has no country!). Thus in the last decade of the 19th century, in the year 1895 there were suggestions made by surgeons in the USA to the German Society of Surgery for establishing an international society for surgeons¹¹. Similar plans were also made in France¹¹. Increasing international contacts would enable the sharing of technical skills. The benefits of a great number of experienced surgeons, gathering together clearly saved both time and effort.

Eventually the enthusiasm of 6 or 7 Belgian surgeons gave rise to the birth of the first international Society of Surgery which one hundred years later has nearly ,000 members from 93 countries. It is fascinating and almost incredible, how a small group of surgeons working in a small, not very prominent country like Belgium was able to initiate and promote the founding of and development of a large surgical organization that subsequently became established worldwide. How has this society managed to survive so long in spite of the very substantial difficulties, including the troubles of two world wars, international political disasters and financial depressions and over the years attracted the most distinguished, renowned surgical elite of the globe?

3 Milestones in the life of the International Society of Surgery

The Founding of the International Society of Surgery (ISS/SIC)

Eventually, some surgeons of Brussels – the beautiful city known for cultural and scientific traditions (Fig. 3.1.) – who were not only strong supporters of the Listerian methods, but also in sympathy with the spirit of advance and change and had the ability to speak several European languages took over the task of founding such a society^{12,13}. It is not certain who actually had the idea of forming the ISS/SIC. It is very likely that the stimulus came principally from the Belgian surgeons Arthur Gallet (Figs. 3.2 and 3.3)^{11,12}, Charles Willems, Antoine Depage, Jules Lorthioir and Jean Verhoogen (Fig. 3.4 a–e)^{14–16}. Both, Depage and Verhoogen had served as the first secretaries of the Royal Society of Surgery of Belgium which was established in 1893 (Table 3.1, Fig. 3.5).



Figure 3.1 The market place in Brussels about 1895 [Phototypie Albert (Bruxelles) Collection Liebermann-Meffert].

A delegation of prominent surgeons from 17 European countries and Roswell Park from the USA followed the call of Charles Willems, President of the Belgian Society of Surgery at that time to come to Brussels for the annual congress^{11,17}. On September 9, 1902 at the end of the annual congress of the Société Royale Belge de Chirurgie – the group of Belgian, European and Overseas surgeons¹¹ gathered together for an extraordinary session to discuss the idea and to found what was the first International Society of Surgery (ISS/SIC). Charles Willems proposed first, to choose a provisional international committee having the task to advance the recruitment of the society, to elaborate a scheme of a constitution and a programme. He proposed secondly that the international committee should be composed by one delegate of each coun-

Table 3.1 Founding year of selected still existing National Societies in chronological order

| Year | Nation | Name |
|------|-----------------|--|
| 1843 | Great Britain | Royal College of Surgeons |
| 1872 | Germany | Deutsche Gesellschaft für Chirurgie |
| 1873 | Russia | Russian Scientific Surgical Society |
| 1880 | USA | Societas Chirurgica Americana |
| 1882 | Italy | Società Italiana di Chirurgia |
| 1884 | France | Association Française de Chirurgie |
| 1889 | Poland | Association of the Polish Surgeons |
| 1893 | Belgium | Société Royale Belge de Chirurgie |
| 1899 | Japan | Japan Society of Surgery |
| 1902 | The Netherlands | Nederlandse Vereniging voor Heelkunde |
| 1905 | Sweden | Svensk Kirurgisk Förening |
| 1913 | Switzerland | Schweizerische Gesellschaft für Chirurgie |
| 1913 | USA | American College of Surgeons |
| 1937 | China | Chinese Surgical Society |
| 1957 | Austria | Österreichische Gesellschaft für Chirurgie |
| 1977 | Canada | Canadian Association of General Surgeons |
| 1978 | Portugal | Sociedade Portuguesa de Cirurgia |

try. Consensus was given and one delegate for each attending country was elected. For its constitution the ISS/SIC published a Bulletin 11 containing the *Compte Rendu des Séances sur les Travaux des Membres*.

The aim of the founders of the project was primarily scientific. The tenor of Article 1 of the Statutes of the ISS/SIC (see Chapter 4 and Fig. 4.1) corresponds to Article 2 of the Statutes of the Royal Society of Surgery of Belgium of 1893^{14,51}. With the new emphasis on research it was of the greatest importance that the standard of clinical surgery should be maintained at the highest level.

Between the years 1902 and 1905 Leopold Mayer, then the clinical assistant of the Secretary General elect Antoine Depage and Assistant Secretary General elect of the Society, traveled extensively through Europe and presumably in the



Figure 3.2 The surgeon Arthur Gallet who proposed the concept of founding the International Society of Surgery in Belgium [Courtesy of Docent R. van Hee, Antwerpen].

bonne conduite, le témoignage que nos efforts n'ont pas été stériles et que la Société internationale de chirurgie est sans doute appelée à l'avenir félicitant que nous avons réuni pour elle.

Discours de M. le Prof^r Kocher, Président du Congrès.

HONNORABLE LE MINISTRE, MESSIEURS,

Le Congrès international de chirurgie a toujours de tout cœur à l'hommage qui vient d'être rendu à Sa Majesté le Roi des Belges, à M. le Ministre, à M. le Secrétaire général. Nous sommes vraiment heureux de nous réunir dans cette hospitalière Belgique, qui, sous la direction éclairée de son Roi, a souvent montré aux autres nations le chemin du progrès.

Permettez-moi, avant d'aborder le sujet dont je compte vous entretenir, d'arrêter un instant votre pensée sur ceux de nos collègues qui nous ont précédés et dont nous sommes si fiers de nous associer à leur œuvre et de leur succéder. Ils ont donné leur exemple et leur œuvre et que déjà la mort est venue surprendre.

Je veux évoquer ici, d'abord, le souvenir de Seb. von Mikulicz; nous avons songé sur lui et nous savons qu'il se serait dévoué sans réserve à l'école que nous commençons aujourd'hui. Notre système équivaut, avec respect, les enseignements que nous percevons dans ses longues expériences et cette vaste tradition qui n'avait d'égal que son habileté opératoire.

Que sa famille, qui a bien voulu nous faire parvenir ses vœux pour le succès du Congrès et attester l'intérêt qu'elle lui porte, reçoive la respectueuse expression de nos profonds regrets pour celui qui n'est plus.

Il est d'autres noms auxquels la reconnaissance doit être fidèle; car la mort a touché la merle même avant même qu'elle fût levée; ceux de Tilgner, le chirurgien renommé, dont les excellents travaux d'anatomie topographique et chirurgicale sont toujours appréciés comme une direction précieuse pour l'opérateur chirurgical; de Schede, qui a le mérite d'avoir, en des premiers, étudié la méthode de Lister et d'avoir permis Volkmann à l'accepter. Schede a contribué, d'une manière puissante, au développement de nos connaissances du traitement des plaies et des méthodes opératoires. Ajoutons les noms de Hanger, de Braun, de Seydewitz, et surtout celui du chirurgien belge Arthur Gallet, qui nous rappelleront des collègues regrettés de nous tous.

Arthur Gallet a été le promoteur principal de cette réunion, et nous nous souvenons des démarches qu'il a faites, il y a plusieurs années, pour fonder une Société internationale de chirurgie.

Figure 3.3 First page of the inaugural lecture of Professor Kocher, President of the first Congress of the ISS/SIC in 1905. At the end of the page is quoted Arthur Gallet as the promoter of the ISS/SIC ¹⁵

United States of America making friends with prominent surgeons, in order to establish international contacts, to discuss the matter of organization and the statutes of the planned association and, not least, obtaining the ideas of colleagues to organize the first congress in 1905^{18,19}.

Original notes of the early period after the foundation appear not to have survived. At least they are not established by documentary evidence in the Archives of the ISS/SIC. Fortunately the arguments in favour of creating the



Charles Willems



Antoine Depage



Jules Lorthioir



Jean Verhoogen



Arthur Gallet

Figure 3.4 The Belgian founders of the ISS/SIC.



Figure 3.5 Hôtel de Sociétés Scientifiques in Brussels. In this building the idea of founding the ISS/SIC was presumably born [Photo Thill, courtesy of the Secretariat of the Hôtel de Sociétés Scientifiques].

International Society of Surgery and its aims have been well documented in subsequent Congress publications. The inaugural session was reported three years later in the first issue of the ISS/SIC Congress Volume in 1905^{15,18}, in the *Journal of the Royal Society of Surgery of Belgium*¹¹, and in the publications prepared to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the *Société Royale Belge de Chirurgie* in the year 1993^{13,14}.

Change of corporate form

The officers of the bureau at Brussels governed – without any legal identity – the affairs of the Society including the finances. Thirty-three years were to elapse before the Society became registered as a public law corporation. This status was required by the Belgian legislation in the year 1919 and by the International Convention of 1922/23 for public services²⁰. Thereupon, in order to establish the correctness of the statutes, the President of the International Committee Verhoogen, the Secretary General Dejardin, and the Treasurer Paul Lorthioir filed the constitution among official records to the Ministry of Justice on October 27, 1938 (Fig. 3.6). Following the approval of the statutes by the Ministry application was made for the ISS/SIC to be granted the status of a cor-

N. 108. **Société Internationale de Chirurgie,**
Association Internationale à but scientifique, à Bruxelles,
 (Président de la commission civile
 en vertu de la loi du 25 octobre 1919,
 arrêté royal du 17 décembre 1920)

STATUTS

Article 1^{er}. L'association, fondée à Bruxelles, en 1902, sous le nom de Société Internationale de Chirurgie, a pour but de contribuer au progrès de la science, en recherchant à résoudre certaines questions d'ordre chirurgical.

Cette association a son siège à Bruxelles.

Art. 2. Le nombre des membres de l'Association est illimité. Le comité international est composé de trois ans, avant le congrès, le nombre de membres pour chaque pays. Sont membres d'honneur de la société, les chirurgiens agréés par le comité international, sur la proposition du comité de leur pays. La reconnaissance de nouveaux objectifs nationaux se fait par le comité international.

Les membres payent une cotisation trimestrielle, dont le montant est fixé par le comité international; cette cotisation donne droit aux publications de la société.

Des membres qui ne touchent à la société des services distingués peuvent se voir décerner par l'assemblée générale le titre de membres d'honneur; ils n'en ont pas le devoir de cotisation.

Art. 13. Perdent le titre de membre de la société les membres qui auront été déshonorés indignes par un vote secret du comité international réunissant les quatre cinquièmes des voix; après cette déshonoration ne pourra être réintégré par une réunion du comité international spécialement convoquée à cet effet. En outre, les membres qui, malgré deux appels, démissionnent sans que leur démission soit considérée comme définitive, et sont rayés d'office de la liste des membres.

Art. 14. Les sections locales ou départementales ainsi que les branches d'un membre déshonoré, perdent tout droit aux avantages de l'association et ne peuvent réintégrer ni aucune part dans l'œuvre mais se reconvoquent de création ou de réajustement quelconques.

Bruxelles, 14, rue Ruysser.

Le président du comité international,

J. VANROOYEN

Le secrétaire général,

E. DUYSSER

Le trésorier,

P. LUYSSER

Liste des membres du bureau du comité international permanent de la Société Internationale de Chirurgie.

Président : M. Verhagen, Jean-Antoine, docteur en médecine, Hôtel 28, rue des Cordeliers, Bruxelles.

Secrétaire général : M. Dejuelle, Léopold-Marcelle-Arthur, docteur en médecine, Hôtel 24, rue de Commerce, Bruxelles.

Trésorier : M. Corbière, Paul-Emile-Constant-Jules, docteur en médecine, Hôtel 78, rue Faidherbe, Bruxelles.

Duplimate, enregistré en 1919 sous le n° 1 à Saint-Josse-ten-Noode, le 26 novembre 1920, volume 99, folio 84, case Z. Room 15 Binas. Le directeur A.P. (signature illisible).

(130 lbs).

Figure 3.6 First and last section of the publication by the Ministry of Law in the Journal Annexe au Moniteur Belge 1939 which was necessary to approve the statutes of the ISS/SIC 20.

porate body on November 24, 1938. By the decree of King Leopold III of Belgium (Fig. 3.7) the Society became a legal body on December 19, 1938 and could act under the name ISS/SIC and take legal proceedings. The statutes were published in the *Annexe au Moniteur Belge* on January 28, 1939²⁰. All the subsequent modifications of the Constitution were similarly published in the *Annex au Moniteur* until 1974. Thereafter no notices are found in the ISS/SIC archives. In particular none concerning the dissolution of the Society in the late 1970s.

Transfer of the Headquarters from Brussels to Basle

In 1980, the office of the ISS/SIC was moved from Belgium to Switzerland. This drastic change resulted from several unsolved problems which started in the fifties (see chapter 10).

Those instrumental in effecting the translocation of the Society to Basle were the new Secretary General Martin Allgöwer from Switzerland, the past Secretary General Jan van Geertruyden from Belgium, Frank Gerbode from the USA and Sir Thomas Holmes-Sellors from England (see chapter 11).

The legal requirements provided by barristers at law²¹ at the court of appeal were summarized as follows:

Present Position

It was considered desirable for the future development of the Society that the administrative offices should be outside Belgium. A legal agreement was therefore required to enable a new location to be the Headquarters.

Proposals

a) Dissolution of the Belgian Society and creation of a new International Society of Surgery abroad was not covered by the original statutes. A legal opinion suggested that any decision on dissolution could only be taken by a unanimous vote of the entire membership. However, for practical reasons this might be interpreted as a unanimous vote by those attending the General Assembly. Accordingly it was suggested that all members should be invited to a General Assembly at the next congress in 1979 at San Francisco. The Belgian Consul should be present as a notary public and on this occasion the unanimous vote for dissolution should be taken. Technically during a period of transition financial assets must be liquidated and outstanding debts paid.



a



b

Figure 3.7 Decree of King Leopold III of Belgium which gives the ISS/SIC the status of a public law corporation. The document inscribed on front (a) and back (b) is 34,5 to 21,5 centimeters in size [Archives of the ISS/SIC, Pratteln].

b) To achieve the transfer of the Headquarters from Belgium Article 1 of the present Constitution would have to be changed. This would also require a unanimous vote at the General Assembly. This, however, would be contrary to Belgian law which requires the permanent committee of the Society to be in Belgium.

c) Article 17 of the present Constitution also required that the Secretary General, the Assistant Secretary General and the General Treasurer should all be conveniently domiciled for the performance of their duties. A move of the administrative offices abroad would require the officers to be conveniently domiciled near the new Headquarters. Legal opinion suggested that those domiciled in Switzerland, France and England could all be considered. This solution appeared legally acceptable on condition that technically the seat of the society remained in Belgium – even only as a mail box.



Figure 3.8 Victor Bertschi,
Administrative Director of the
Headquarter in Pratteln since 1980.

A financial reconciliation of the funds of the Society was required at the time of the transfer of the Headquarters. This was arranged by Professor Allgöwer (see chapter 5, p. 54).

The final events regarding the transfer of the secretariat from Brussels to Basel are well recorded in the correspondence between the Administrative Director of the Headquarters in Pratteln/Switzerland (Fig. 3.8) and the Canadian surgeon Professor C. Barber Mueller, McMaster, Hamilton. Mr. Victor Bertschi recalled:

When I started to work as Administrative Secretary and later Administrative Director for the International Society of Surgery it was just the time when the move of the Headquarters of ISS/SIC – formerly the “Société Internationale de Chirurgie” – had started. I recall that Prof. Martin Allgöwer has been elected President of ISS/SIC at the Congress in San Francisco at the beginning of September 1979. His presidency ended in 1981 with the World Congress of Surgery in Montreux, Switzerland. After this period Prof. Allgöwer served for another 12 years as Secretary General which was quite unusual. One reason for this unusual change of office was because of the International Foundation for Postgraduate Surgery.

When it became obvious that Prof. Allgöwer would be nominated President of the World Congress of Surgery in San Francisco in 1979 and for the following two consecutive years as Society President, he offered to the International Society of Surgery free infrastructure for a period of five years. The financial situation of the Society by that time was not very good even though large assets were listed in the books. We later had to realize that the Brussels office simply listed the owed annual dues (for several years and several hundred Members) as assets. Needless to say many members owed dues. This finally resulted in a shortage of money at the Brussels office. In view of the special offer by Prof. Allgöwer to take over expenditures for the ISS Head Office for an initial period of five years through the International Foundation for Postgraduate Surgery the Executive Committees and later the ISS/SIC Membership could hardly fail to accept this offer.

By the end of January in 1979 I started to work for Prof. Allgöwer. During the first year, in which we had many Meetings with the ISS/SIC Officials, we started to prepare the move from the Brussels Headquarters to the University Hospital in Basle, Switzerland. The former Secretary General, Prof. Jean van Geertruyden from Brussels was instrumental in helping us to get the preparatory work done for the Executive Committee Meeting and the following General Assembly at the World Congress of Surgery in San Francisco in 1979. Also a lawyer from Brussels had to be involved because the constitution of the “Société” was strictly bound to Belgian law. In fact a move of the Headquarters from Belgium to another country was impossible. The lawyer in Brussels, together with Prof. van Geertruyden had worked out a solution which enabled the Society to move to Switzerland, provided the General Assembly would accept such a move. According to their view, the Executive